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Newfoundland Labrador

Education
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Minister Highlights Adult Learning Initiatives

The importance of lifelong learning is being highlighted this week as provinces and territories throughout Canada recognize International Adult Learners' Week, March 3-9. The Honourable Joan Burke, Minister of Education, said the Williams Government is striving to ensure that an array of learning opportunities is available to anyone wanting to upgrade their literacy skills.

"The Provincial Government has made significant investments in adult learning and literacy over the past several years, recognizing the critical role education plays in our success as a province," said Minister Burke. "Those with low literacy levels are not always able to fully participate in the social and economic life of their communities. Strong literacy skills are absolutely essential to ensure all communities are vibrant and productive. Education provides the tools people, young and old alike, need to harness their potential and put their strengths to work for their families, communities, and the greater success of Newfoundland and Labrador."

The Williams Government has made significant investments in adult learning and literacy in recent years, with $23.4 million allocated for literacy since 2004. Some of this funding was used to provide an additional $1.2 million to expand Adult Basic Education (ABE) Level I at College of the North Atlantic, expand the Comprehensive Arts and Science College Transition (CAS) program at a cost of $650,000, and several million dollars in adult literacy grants has been provided to community-based organizations. A new $50,000 scholarship program was also recently introduced to help recent GED, CAS or ABE graduates with the cost of post-secondary training. The latest initiative involves the development of a new adult literacy plan for the province.

"The new plan will have a distinctly regional focus, recognizing that one size does not fit all," said Minister Burke. "Targeted consultations will begin shortly, and in the coming months, a website will be developed and a discussion paper forwarded to key stakeholders. Ultimately, our goal is for regional action plans to be put in place to address local challenges and strengths.

"As we celebrate International Adult Learners' Week, I want to express my sincere appreciation to everyone throughout the province who strives daily to help adults improve their literacy levels," the minister concluded. "Education is not something that happens to us between the ages of five and 18. Rather, it is a continuous, participatory, lifelong process. It begins at birth and continues into our senior years. And it is only through education that individuals and our province can hope to succeed."

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Photo #1: Minister Burke signs International Adult Learners' Week proclamation. Seated are Kim Gilliard, coordinator of the Learner Network, Caroline Vaughan, executive director of Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador, the Honourable Joan Burke, Minister of Education and Dennis Luther, an adult learner. Back row, Heather Powell of the health and literacy committee of Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador, Tom Dawe, executive director of Teachers on Wheels, Karyn Murphy, Centre for Health Information and Ed Wade, Literacy Newfoundland and Lab board member.

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